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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the attitudes of Turkish secondary school English-as-a-Foreign-Language (EFL) teachers about various aspects of communicative language teaching, noting difficulties they encountered when teaching English communicatively in the Turkish EFL context. Data collection involved surveys of and focus group interviews with high school and university prep school teachers. Data analysis indicated that the teachers had favorable attitudes overall, and they agreed that group/pair work activities developed oral conversational and communication skills, encouraged student involvement, and increased the quality of language practice and students' motivation to use English. Nonetheless, there were many constraints to teaching EFL, including the educational system (e.g., large classes and expectations of school administrators regarding classroom management and implementation of curriculum); the students (e.g., lack of motivation to participate); and the teachers themselves. Teachers' reservations about teaching EFL stemmed from the conflict between what they believed and what they could actually practice within the context of their schools. (Contains 46 references.) (SM)

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# EFL Teachers' Voice on Communicative Language Teaching

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**Abstract**

This study investigates 193 Turkish EFL teachers' attitudes towards some aspects of Communicative Language Teaching through an attitude scale. A follow-up interview study is conducted to identify the constraints in the successful implementation of communicative innovations within the context of an English-medium private school and an Anatolian Lycee.

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## I. Introduction

Ever since Wilkins (1976) analyzed the notional and functional categories of language and Hymes (1979) mentioned "communicative competence" in early 1970s, language has been viewed as a functional system for the expression of meaning and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has evolved as the most prevailing approach in language teaching. Over the last 30 years a great deal has been written and discussed on its philosophy and implications for language teaching (e.g. Paulston, 1974; Canale & Swain, 1980; Breen & Candlin, 1980; Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983; Savignon, 1983; Larsen-Freeman, 1986; Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Sheils, 1988; Nunan, 1991). Despite the lack of consensus on its theoretical foundations, of a universally accepted model of language teaching (McGroarty, 1984; Nattinger, 1984; Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Mitchell 1994) and some misconceptions leading to practical inefficiencies (Swain, 1985; Thompson, 1996), CLT has been supported and promoted in book chapters, conference papers as an innovation to language teaching and adopted by language teachers, program developers and school curricula in both ESL and EFL contexts all over the world. In this paper, ESL context is used to refer to English-speaking communities where it is taught to the speakers of other languages while EFL context refers to non-English speaking communities where English is a Foreign Language (Richards, 1985).

## II. CLT Innovations in EFL Contexts

The reason why CLT has been regarded an innovation in language teaching methodology is that it aims the development of language learner's communicative competence, i.e. their ability to use

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linguistic knowledge of language appropriately in a variety of social situations (Hymes, 1979), unlike the traditional structural methods that merely target the development of linguistic knowledge. For the achievement of this aim, CLT requires a considerable amount of exposure to target language and a learner-centered, communication-oriented language instruction based on learner's language learning needs in a supportive, non-judgmental and non-threatening classroom atmosphere. In such an atmosphere, learners are provided with more practice and experience in language used in real communication situations through the use of authentic materials (Larsen-Freeman, 1986; Nunan, 1991; Little, Devitt & Singleton, 1994). The activities learners are involved in offer them real roles, situations and real purposes to communicate (Xiaoju, 1984; Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Harmer, 1991). As the initiators of most interactions in these activities, learners share their knowledge, experience, feelings and reactions with their classmates, and accept correction from their peers as well as teachers who are independent participants oscillating between the roles of facilitator and director transmitter (Larsen-Freeman, 1986; Sheils, 1988; Harmer, 1991).

Even though these innovations are found to be successful in ESL contexts, their success in EFL contexts has always remained as a controversial issue (Anderson, 1993; Sun & Cheng, 2000). EFL teachers who adopted CLT encountered various difficulties, which led to an increasing concern on the appropriateness of this Western language teaching method in other contexts with different cultural and educational norms. Thus, the investigation of what cause these difficulties became the main inspiration of CLT studies. In some contexts, CLT was reported to be difficult to use owing to EFL teachers' perceptions of their own deficiency in English competence, especially sociolinguistic and strategic competence (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Anderson, 1993; Li, 1998), and in the knowledge of the target culture (Liao, 2000). Burnaby & Sun (1989) reported that Chinese teachers found CLT more suitable for ESL contexts and cited the context of the wider curriculum, class sizes and schedules, lack of resources, and the low status of teachers who teach communicative rather than analytical skills as the main constraints on implementing CLT.

Anderson (1993) reported other obstacles in Chinese context such as lack of teachers properly trained in CLT and students not being accustomed to interactive classroom activities. Chinese students tended to associate communicative activities with entertainment only and regarded communicative games as a waste of time. Besides, influenced by China's Confucian culture which seeks compromise between people, Chinese students avoided expressing their opinions in group and pair work activities for the fear of losing face or offending others (Liao, 2000). Discouraged by their deeply-rooted cultural traditions, Egyptian students also avoid expressing their views in classroom

for the very same reason (Gahin and Myhil, 2001). In the EFL context of Egypt where traditional student-teacher roles are defined by cultural values, teachers have a prophetic image strengthening their authority in the class that does not match with the roles of communicative teachers.

While learners' resistance to active participation in communicative classes formed an important obstacle to introduce CLT in Pakistan (Shamim, 1996), in Moroccan context where curricular innovations are not welcome, teachers themselves refused to use group and pair work activities in their classes (Nolasco & Arthur, 1990). Working in pairs and small groups were also disliked by Japanese students who are used to working with the teacher in whole class activities (Hyde, 1993) and by South Korean learners who prefer traditional settings in which they could sit motionless and take notes while the teacher lectures (Li, 1998). South Korean teachers complained about the lack of CLT experts who could offer them professional help while managing communicative classes.

The lack of effective and efficient assessment instruments in CLT was reported to be another important constraint in these contexts. Pointing out the grammar-based examinations in which the students are evaluated through grammar, reading comprehension and translation questions in South Korea, teachers reported that CLT could not provide an effective assessment instrument and gave no account to the purpose of English learning in South Korean EFL context. Similarly, pedagogical practices in Vietnam focusing mainly on grammar translation and memorization, and exams that do not measure learners' ability to use meaningful language in social situations, made CLT unsuitable for Vietnamese context as well (Ellis, 1994). Ellis also mentioned lack of exposure to authentic language and teachers' insufficient contact with students in large classes as factors making CLT difficult to adopt in that context.

These studies draw the attention to important factors that need to be taken into account to manage innovations in EFL contexts: First, they reveal the importance of the nature and diversity of contexts in language teaching by unveiling an existing conflict between what CLT demands to be successfully implemented and what the EFL contexts can provide. Second, they show the importance of teachers' perceptions of the feasibility of curricular innovations and their educational attitudes towards them. Teachers come to class with their own values and attitudes about learning and teaching that shape their language teaching behaviors and teaching styles (Savignon, 1976; Johnson, 1995; Gayle 1979) and these attitudes may be inconsistent with the theories of the new approaches. Finally, they display that it is necessary to have a clear understanding as to the aims of innovations and to what degree they can meet the language learners' needs in that context.

## III. English Teaching in Turkish EFL Context

Before investigating the place and applicability of CLT in Turkish EFL context, it is helpful to elaborate briefly on the penetration of English into the Turkish Education system in terms of having a better understanding of the diversity of school contexts in which it is taught and learners' needs to learn English in this society.

The history of English language learning and teaching in Turkey dates back to the foundation of the first private American school, Robert College, in 1863. Although almost half a century later, English also began to be taught in state-owned public schools as a subject in 1908, its actual integration into the Turkish education system started in the 1950s upon the realization of its significance in the global society (Dogancay-Aktuna, 1998). With the impact of the economic, military and technological advances in English-speaking countries during that time, English began to spread all over the world gaining priority over other languages taught in EFL contexts. On the grounds of these developments, Turkey felt a strong need to be able to communicate in that language to improve international trade relations and to make progress in technology, education and arts (Ibid.). However, language education that was provided only a few hours a week in state-owned schools was not successful enough to produce proficient speakers of English (Demircan, 1988). Thus, in an effort to meet the high demand for people who are fluent and competent in English, more English-medium schools were established in big cities, especially after a decision taken in the 1960s to launch immersion programs where part of instruction is given in a second language (Akunal, 1992). In a short period of time, the number of English-medium schools increased dramatically.

During the last two decades, English spread even more rapidly in Turkey as an inevitable consequence of its constant efforts for modernization and its close contacts with free market economies that opened the doors to new brands of products, new concepts and popular American culture reflected in American media (Dogancay-Aktuna, 1998). Thus, not only the language itself, but also its culture began to spread into many domains of Turkish life.

Today, English has been the most commonly used foreign language of instruction in hundreds of private primary education and high schools and many universities in the major cities. It is also the most commonly taught foreign language in state-owned public high schools. As in many EFL contexts, Turkish people want to study English mainly for better education, better career

opportunities and achievement in business and academic life. However, for socioeconomic reasons, not everyone in Turkey has equal opportunities to have access to the same quality of English language education (Ibid.). There is a huge discrepancy among the types of schools in terms of the time they devote to English, methods and materials used, the educational background and the academic skills of teachers employed, and especially in the socioeconomic status of the students enrolled.

In state-owned public schools where the medium of instruction is Turkish, the study of a foreign language is compulsory and therefore students are expected to choose one among English, French and German. As aforementioned, English is the most preferred language in these schools and students receive 3-6 hours of English instruction a week throughout their education. As teachers are directly appointed by the Turkish Ministry of Education, they do not need to strive for a competitive position and are not motivated to prepare supplementary materials or to adopt communicative activities in their classes. Instead, they are required to use textbooks full of audio-lingual activities and strictly follow the curriculum and syllabus prepared by a commission that the Ministry of Education approves. The majority of these schools suffer from overcrowded classes and lack of materials and teaching aids. Not surprisingly, the graduates of these schools cannot achieve high levels of proficiency in English.

In state-owned Anatolian Lycees that are established for the purpose of teaching students at least one foreign language, students attend one to two years of preparatory classes followed by a 6-year English-medium instruction. Except for courses like Turkish language and literature, Turkish history, geography, religious and civic studies that are required to be taught in Turkish in every school by law, other courses are given in English in these schools. Since the enrollment requires high scores obtained on a competitive entrance exam, the students attending these schools are exposed to a more competitive, more intense and qualified language education than those in public schools and eventually develop better competence in English. The textbooks used are almost the same as the ones used in private English-medium schools and are replete with communicative classroom activities. Teachers, who have more flexibility in their decisions to choose their materials and methodology, also have more opportunities to develop their teaching skills and update themselves through in-service trainings and seminars, especially in big cities. Although the classrooms are crowded, they have enough sources of materials and teaching aids.

The private English-medium schools provide the best quality of English education in Turkey due to the vast amount of time they devote to English in their curriculum and the facilities they can offer to their students in less crowded and more equipped classrooms. These schools have more freedom to adopt their language teaching methodology and more funding to hire the most qualified teachers, some of whom are native speakers of English. Although some of the private schools are extremely competitive and accept the students with the highest scores on an entrance exam, there exist some others with low requirements and that are accessible to all who can afford their expensive costs. In other words, they are more accessible to wealthy upper class children regardless of their capacity and it is because of that reason Dogancay-Aktuna (1998) concludes that English cannot penetrate into the low socioeconomic strata of society in her detailed analysis of the depth and range of English in Turkey.

CLT has been quite popular among EFL teachers in English-medium schools and some Anatolian Lycees. Communicative teaching materials and textbooks used in these schools, and the seminars that have been held to inform teachers of the use of communicative activities encourage them to adopt communicative interactions in language classes. In a study that investigates the beliefs and attitudes of Turkish EFL teachers towards teaching English, 56 % of Altan's (1997) teachers identify CLT as the most frequently used teaching method and cite teacher training courses, seminars organized for teachers, past experience as language learner and self-reflection as the factors shaping their views of teaching. However, there is not much empirical information as to what Turkish EFL teachers think about communicative practices, how they perceive its innovations and to what degree they believe CLT can be used in Turkish schools. Therefore, in an attempt to fill this gap, the present study investigates teachers' attitudes towards some aspects of CLT and the difficulties encountered in its use in Turkish schools, drawing the attention to the factors that need to be considered in transporting the innovations in the teaching of English across contexts.

## IV. The Study

Following research questions are investigated in this study: 1. What are Turkish EFL teachers' attitudes towards Communicative Language Teaching? 2. What are the difficulties facing teachers in teaching English communicatively in Turkish EFL context?

## 1. Teachers' Attitudes towards CLT

### *Data Collection*

Data was collected through a Communicative Language Teaching Attitude Scale (COLTAS) during the first semester of 1998-1999 school year. Except for three of the schools where data was collected with the help of three English language teachers working in these schools, other schools were visited by the researcher herself to inform teachers of the purpose of the study and to secure their consent to contribute to the project by indicating their degree of agreement on each item of the scale.

### *Participants:*

193 Turkish EFL teachers at randomly selected nine high schools and three university prep schools in various parts of Istanbul participated in this study. Except for two state-owned public universities and one military high school, all the rest were English-medium schools. 134 (69%) of the participants were teachers at private schools while 59 (31 %) of them were at public schools. At the time of the study, 47 (24%) participants were teaching at primary school, 47 (24%) at junior high, 56 (30%) at senior high, and 43 (22%) at University prep. Demographic data also revealed that 146 (76%) of the teachers were female and 47 (24%) were male within the age range of 24 to 57. Their experience in teaching EFL varied from one to 35 years. As for the educational background of teachers, 153 (79%) had a BA, 39 (20%) had an MA, and 1 (0.5 %) had a Ph.D. degree in the field of English Language Teaching.

### *Instrument (COLTAS)*

COLTAS is a five-point Likert type attitude scale with 36 statements developed to investigate teachers' attitudes towards some aspects of CLT (Eveyik, 1999). Although attitudes can be investigated through a variety of methods, Likert type scales have been the most frequently used techniques for the measurement of attitudes as they are cost-effective, relatively easy to construct and administer and they tend to yield more reliable results compared to other scaling techniques (Oppenheim, 1966; Gardner & Smythe; 1981). Despite the existence of other scales investigating attitudes towards CLT (e.g. Karavas-Doukas, 1996), it was believed in the necessity of developing a new scale in which the domains to be investigated are determined by Turkish EFL teachers'

perceptions of CLT and which can be used as a data collection instrument in Turkish EFL context. Hence, following steps were pursued in the construction of this scale:

First, domains of attitude to be measured by COLTAS were determined based on an interview with 20 Turkish EFL teachers whose perceptions of the innovations of CLT were grouped into the domains of group/pair work activities, place of grammar, student/teachers roles and peer/ teacher corrections. Next, statements to be put on the scale were generated based on a review of literature on the essentials of CLT in relation to the selected domains. Out of 114 initially generated items, 60 (53%) reflected a communicative point of view while 54 (47%) items reflected a more structural/grammatical view of language teaching. Therefore, from a communicative point of view the former statements were labeled "positive (favorable)" items while the latter were called "negative (unfavorable)" items. These items were later evaluated by 18 judges, who were the professors of ELT at Turkish and American Universities or students of PhD or Master's with language teaching experience, and given a score from 1 through 3 (1 to poorly worded and neutral statements; 2 to ones that can be used with some modifications; 3 to ones that best fit the purpose of the scale). Then, the mean score for each item was calculated and those with the highest means were chosen to be the items of the actual scale. Thus, initial 114 statements were reduced to 36 (18 favorable/18 unfavorable) and randomly placed into a scale with points ranging from "strongly agree" to "agree", "uncertain", "disagree", and "strongly disagree" (See Appendix).

Before its actual use to collect data, COLTAS was piloted with 5 teachers who were first administered the scale and then asked about their attitudes to CLT for the comprehensibility check of the items and to see if the scale reflects the attitudes. When their responses to the items were analyzed, it was found that those who stated positive attitudes were the ones who agreed on the positive items and disagreed on the negative ones. Those who stated neutral and negative attitudes, on the other hand, were the ones who disagreed or hesitated to agree on most of the positive items. Thus, teachers' attitudes were found to be reflected by the responses they gave on the COLTAS.

***Data Analysis***

Data collected through COLTAS from 193 teachers was processed by SPSS/8.0 statistical package for reliability studies. Before the score of each subject on each item was entered into the program, it was decided that a high score obtained on the scale would mean a favorable attitude towards the domains of CLT, whereas low scores would reveal unfavorable attitude. Therefore, the positive items of the scale were scored 5 for "strongly agree" down to 1 for "strongly disagree"

while the negative items were reverse scored by giving 1 for "strongly agree" up to 5 for "strongly disagree". Thus, the highest and the lowest scores that could be obtained on this scale was 180 (36x5) and 36 (36x1), respectively.

Since these scores were the indicators of participants' positive or negative attitudes towards the selected domains of CLT, their answers were tabulated to display the scores obtained on the scale. The scores between 180 and 144 (36x4) showed the most favorable attitudes towards CLT while the scores between 36 and 72 (36x2) showed the least favorable attitudes with a mid score of 108 (3x36) that reflected neutral (neither favorable nor unfavorable) attitude. Thus, scores between 109 and 143 showed favorable attitudes with some reservations while the scores between 73 and 107 revealed unfavorable attitudes with some reservations towards CLT in relation to the four domains.

**2. Difficulties in the Implementation of CLT**

***Data Collection***

In order to find the constraints making the implementation of CLT difficult for teachers in Turkish EFL context, two focus groups were formed and interviewed at two different school settings in Istanbul and Giresun, a small city in Northern Turkey. The interviews were semi structured and conducted in Turkish so that participants can fully express their ideas and attitudes. Although the interview questions were generally based on the items of the COLTAS about group/pair work activities, place of grammar, student/teacher roles and peer/teacher corrections, teachers were also allowed to express their general attitudes to all aspects of CLT. The interviews lasted from 1-2 hours each and notes were taken carefully in the meantime. Participants in Giresun were also administered COLTAS after the interview for the purpose of the validation of their answers.

***Participants***

The participants of the first focus group were 15 private school teachers to whom COLTAS had already been administered in the first phase of the study in Istanbul. The second focus group, on the other hand, consisted of 11 teachers at an Anatolian Lycee in Giresun. Except for two male participants, all the rest were females with English teaching experience ranging from 2-20 years. Teachers in the second group were both younger and less experienced than their colleagues in the first group. Besides, unlike the private school teachers most of whom were the graduates of English-medium high schools or English-medium universities, teachers in the second group were the

graduates of Turkish-medium public high schools or Anatolian Lycees, except for one teacher who studied English in Britain.

***Data Analysis***

The interview notes obtained from two different focus groups were studied carefully to find the general themes and patterns, and translated into English. The recurrent themes and the most common complaints regarding the implementation of the selected domains of CLT were identified and listed under three main categories.

## V. The Findings of the Attitude Scale

Scores obtained by 193 teachers who participated in the study ranged from 98 to 170, with a mean score of 137.17 and the standard deviation of 13.41. The distribution of these scores on the scale and their descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1 and Figure1.

**Table 1**

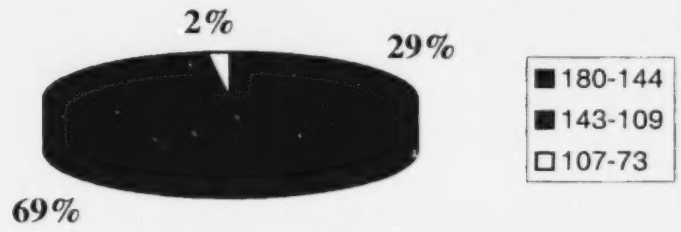
**Distribution of the scores obtained by 193 EFL teachers on COLTAS & their descriptive statistics**

| **Scores** | 180-144 very favorable attitude | 143-109 favorable attitude with some reservations | 108 uncertain | 107-73 unfavorable attitude with some reservations | 72-36 very unfavorable attitude | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **N (%)** | 56 (29) | 133 (69) | _ | 4 (2) | _ | 193 |
| **Mean** | 153 | 132 | _ | 98 | _ | 137.17 |
| **Median** | 151.5 | 134 | _ | 98 | _ | 139 |
| **Mode** | 144 & 155 | 142 | _ | 98 | _ | 142 |
| **SD** | 7.2 | 7.8 | _ | 0 | _ | 13.41 |

The results showed that 56 (29%) of the teachers (30% primary, 18% junior high, 29% senior high, 23% university prep teachers) took a score between 144-180 and revealed very favorable attitudes towards CLT. Only 4 (2%) of them showed unfavorable attitudes by obtaining a low score (98) on the scale while none of the subjects took scores between 72-36 that reflected strongly

unfavorable attitudes. The majority of the teachers (69%), on the other hand, (22% primary, 27% junior high, 29% senior high, 22% university prep teachers) took scores between 143-109 that revealed favorable attitudes with some reservations towards the domains of CLT.

**Figure 1**
**Distribution of the total scores obtained on COLTAS & the percentage of teachers**




Teachers' scores were also tabulated to find their attitudes towards each domain of the scale, it was found that teachers did not favor the four domains to the same degree. As Table 2 reveals group/pair work (49%) was the most favored domain by the teachers and it was followed by the domains of peer/teacher correction (44%), place of grammar (36%) and student/teacher roles (30%).

**Table 2**

**Teachers' attitudes on each domain and the total scale**

| | ( very favorable attitude) | | (favorable attitude with some reservations) | | (uncertain) | | (unfavorable attitude with some reservations) | | (very unfavorable attitude) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | (%) | N | (%) | N | (%) | N | (%) | N | (%) |
| Group/Pair Work | 96 | 49 | 89 | 46 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Grammar | 69 | 36 | 107 | 55 | 7 | 4 | 10 | 5 | – | – |
| Student/teacher roles | 58 | 30 | 112 | 58 | 5 | 3 | 14 | 7 | 4 | 2 |
| Peer/teacher Correction | 84 | 44 | 92 | 47 | 5 | 3 | 12 | 6 | – | – |
| Total scale (COLTAS) | 56 | 29 | 133 | 69 | – | – | 4 | 2 | – | – |

As the table shows, despite their reservations, the majority of teachers agreed that group/pair work activities develop oral conversational and communicational skills, provide a great amount of student involvement and increase the quantity of language practice as well as students' motivation to use English. They also favored peer correction, tolerance to students' mistakes in language structures and non-interfering teacher correction focused on language functions and the content of the activity.

The results also showed that the participants of this study showed tolerable attitudes towards grammatically inaccurate sentences and indirect teaching of grammar with more emphasis on language meaning and functions rather than forms, and on fluency rather than accuracy. As for student/teacher roles in class, they showed less favorable attitudes towards student-centered classes, teacher as need analyst and guide for self-learning, and students as the initiators of most interactions in the class.

Reliability of these results was tested through item-total correlation techniques to see the correlation of each item with the total score obtained on the remaining items on the scale and to check the correlation of an item with the other items within the same domain. An alpha coefficient of 0.84 for whole scale and over 0.7 for each domain was obtained. Besides, Gutman split half reliability coefficient was found to be 0.9. These studies revealed very satisfying results as to the reliability of COLTAS as a data collection instrument as well as to the reliability of the results obtained (Eveyik, 1999).

## VI. The Findings of the Interview

Turkish EFL teachers in both focus groups obtained scores ranging from 107 to 136 on COLTAS that revealed mildly favorable attitudes towards CLT. However, participants were not always internally consistent, sometimes agreeing on both positive and negative statements. When these inconsistencies and their hesitations to tick positive statements were brought into their attention during the interview, participants accepted that their answers were influenced by other factors regardless of their personal beliefs and attitudes. After the analysis of interview results, these factors were found to be stemming from three main sources in general: a) the educational system, b) the teachers and c) the learners. The importance of these sources, however, varied depending on the aspect of CLT.

**1. Group/ Pair work activities**

The constraints reported on the implementation of group/pair work activities in both school settings are related to the educational system, teacher' beliefs and educational values and the students.

***Constraints caused by the educational system***

The most frequently reported problems preventing the successful implementation of group/pair work activities were those caused by the educational system such as large size classes and the expectations of school administrations regarding classroom management and the implementation of curriculum in time. These problems were more frequently mentioned by the teachers at the Anatolian Lycee. All of the 11 participants in this group, mentioned about the difficulty of managing and monitoring students working in pairs in crowded classes. Pointing the sitting order of students as a factor working against the formation of groups, they also complained about their inflexible curriculum that allows little time for extra "time-consuming" group work activities in their classes. Teachers commented:

> *1. I try to integrate group activities into my classes all the time, but there are 40-45 students in my classes and it is really difficult and time-consuming to get them into groups. It takes at least 10 minutes! This is too much time to waste when you have a lot to do. Instead, I prefer having them work in pairs because their sitting order is much more convenient for pair work and I don't need to spend time on rearranging the desks.*
>
> *2. Considering the sitting orders of our students, I can say that pair work activities are much easier, but still it is very difficult to monitor each pair.*
>
> *3. Its management in such crowded classes is not easy at all! When everyone starts talking at the same time, we [English teachers] start getting complaints from other teachers in nearby classrooms. Especially, teachers of mathematics, history, I mean, those who teach other courses. They use more traditional methods of teaching and cannot understand how English classes can be that noisy!*

Similarly, the teachers of the private high school cited the administrative obstacles as an important constraint in the use of group work activities pointing out the complaints they receive from their school administration regarding the noise caused by group works even in their small size classes. Furthermore, all of the teachers in both schools agreed that group work activities require skillful teachers who can manage the class and that there should be more teacher training opportunities to help teachers improve their management strategies.

***Impacts of Teachers' Beliefs***

Teachers' beliefs about the usefulness of group/pair work activities emerged as an important factor influencing their attitudes towards them in both school settings. One of the teachers in private high school complained about the general tendency of Turkish ELT teachers to use these activities just because they are "trendy":

> *4. Honestly, I don't believe in the necessity of integrating group work activities into each class hour. We have 24 students in our classes, perfect number for group work activities. Yet, I have my students work in groups once or twice a week, sometimes once in three weeks. Whenever it is necessary depending on the task! I refuse to use group work activities just for the sake of using them. Besides, we have a lot of speaking activities.*

One of the teachers in Anatolian Lycee stated that some of her colleagues are reluctant to use group work activities because

> *5 ....[they] see the problems caused by group activities as a threat to their authority. They feel like they are loosing control of the class and instantly switch back to more traditional activities. I believe this has to do with their personality, their educational attitudes or even maybe with their past experience as a learner.*

***Difficulties caused by the students***

All of the teachers in both schools found group work activities more suitable for young learners and prep schools, and complained about high school students' lack of motivation for class participation in general.

> *6. Students at the age of 7-9 love working in groups. And it is very fun with them, but high school students don't take those activities serious and simply don't participate. They are not motivated, neither are we!*

Teachers believe that high school students' resistance to classroom participation stem from their low English proficiency and some psychological factors like fear of making mistakes before their classmates. The pressure exerted on students by the current university entrance exam was also reported to be an important factor affecting their interest in English classes.

> *7. If these students are not going to study English at university, I mean, if they are not going to be English majors, they lose their interest in English classes especially during the last year of high school. They spend their whole energy and time to get prepared for the exam that is the most important thing in their life!*

Teachers at the private school also cited students' past learning experience as an important factor affecting the success of group/pair work activities with those students.

> *8. What I observed is that group work activities are easier with students who have been used to working with others since the early grades. If group/pair work was not a part of their early education, then it is more difficult to motivate them to participate in those activities in upper grades. They are more reluctant to talk and share their ideas with their friends.*

**2. Teaching of Grammar**

The teachers interviewed in that study showed favorable attitudes towards indirect teaching of grammar with more emphasis on language use and functions. Teachers in the private school reported.

> *9. We have grammar classes, but we don't even call them grammar. We call them "Skills". We introduce grammar points by creating a situation through pictures and dialogues. Everything is presented in a context and students find out the correct tense to use. They don't need to know it is called 'past perfect'!*

However, they complained about the inconsistency between their ideas and the expectations of the educational system that sets the primary goals in language teaching as the improvement of grammar and receptive skills, i.e. listening and reading. Students who want to study English Language and Literature, and ELT in Turkey are required to take a grammar-based English Test that involves grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension and translation questions as a part of National University Entrance Examination. Therefore, to be able to meet their students' needs, teachers are forced to devote more class time to the teaching of test-taking skills and grammar points during the last two years of high school. Teachers commented on how this system affects the speaking abilities of their students:

> *10. Especially in general public high schools, this is what they do all the time: grammar tests and drills, no interaction, no speaking. Result: students with good grammar knowledge but no speaking abilities.*

> *11. The goals set by our educational system cannot meet our students' needs in the long run. We want our students to be able to express themselves in English, but they are evaluated by their grammar knowledge in the entrance exam. Only after getting accepted to the English programs of the universities, they see the importance of conversational skills.*

**3. Student/ Teacher Roles**

Although the participants of this study identified their roles as a guide and a facilitator of the activities in the classroom, and defined their classes as student-centered most of the time, they also accepted the value of teacher-centered classes in some cases where they need to be more active to encourage student involvement:

> *12. "Just monitor and let them learn!" I don't believe this at all. This might be true in other contexts with different students, but not with ours! Families don't let their children take any responsibilities at all. Naturally, they don't know how to take responsibility in their own learning. They expect everything from us! If we don't push them, they won't do anything!*

They also mentioned that especially in state owned public schools where teachers spend more time on grammar points, the classes are strictly teacher-oriented because of the nature of the activities, low-English proficiency of the teachers, and the disapproval of the noise by the school administration in student-centered crowded classes.

**4. Peer/ Teacher Correction**

The participants' general approach to student mistakes was reflected in the following comments made by some of the teachers in private school:

> *13. We don't correct every mistake not to interrupt the flow of communication and not to discourage our students. They are already very shy and not eager to speak English in the class. We have this concept of "good mistake!". I tell them mistakes are natural outcomes of learning and sometimes help us learn better!*

> *14. We encourage peer correction. That makes them listen to their friends better and learn better.*

However, a few of the teachers reported that they cannot help correcting student mistakes although they know this is not correct. They also reminded the necessity of error correction in classes where students are prepared for the grammar-based university entrance exam.

**5. General Comments on CLT**

Teachers identified being a non-native speaker of English as one of the primary constraints in the implementation of CLT in Turkish EFL context. Although they found teachers in English-

medium schools qualified enough to teach English communicatively and the facilities in those schools appropriate for the use of CLT to some extend, they drew the attention to less qualified English teachers in state-owned public schools where they have no opportunities and motivation to improve their teaching skills and to improve their classes with teaching aids.

> *15. CLT demands a lot from teachers. Teachers should be very creative, spend extra time to prepare supplementary teaching materials, and sometimes should pay for the photocopies themselves because there is no a copy machine in most schools. Besides, most of the teachers in public schools are suffering from economic problems and being a communicative teacher is the last thing in their mind!"*

## VII. Limitations

An important limitation of the first phase of the study stems from the difficulty of attitude measurement. It must be noted that such direct methods of measurement are conducive to some influences which might change the results. The subjects, consciously or unconsciously, might tend to give socially desired answers in order to show themselves more prestigious or more up-to-date and hence, their responses may not elicit their real attitudes (Triandis, 1971; Baker, 1988). In other words, what they report may not always coincide with what they actually do as in Karavas-Doukas' (1996) study. This problem can be eliminated through the careful wording of the items to be used in the scale (Oppenheim, 1966) or the observation of the teachers' language teaching behaviors in classroom. In the present study, the items were carefully selected based on the evaluations of the judges. However, the extent to which the teachers' attitudes were congruent with their actual teaching behaviors could not be investigated because of time limitations. It should also be noted that the results of the study are more reflective of English-medium schools than of state-owned schools and therefore, should not be generalized for all of the schools in every cities of Turkey.

## VIII. Conclusion

This study has revealed important results regarding Turkish EFL teachers' attitudes towards communicative approach to language teaching and their concerns about the practicality of its innovations in different school contexts in Turkey. Although the participants had favorable attitudes, the study pointed to some constraints which are quiet similar to those reported in other EFL contexts. As in Li's (1998) study, the sources of the constraints in Turkish EFL context were reported to be the educational system, the students and the teachers themselves. The interviews

indicated that teachers' reservations especially stemmed from the conflict between what they believe and what they can actually practice within the context of their schools. In other words, their attitudes are situated within the physical context of their schools. Besides, teachers' recurring complaints about the mismatch between their beliefs and the educational policies give clear messages to the policy makers, teacher educators and curriculum developers in Turkey.

From a broader perspective, these findings also draw the attention to some important issues in transferring the innovations to other contexts: First, it is necessary to question the cross-cultural applicability of language teaching methods that originate in a particular educational context to some other contexts with different cultural norms and educational theories. In cases where adoption is out of question, adaptation may be a good solution. Second, teachers' educational attitudes have important roles in the implementation of curricular innovations. The success of innovative methods and approaches depends on the cooperation and involvements of teachers to a great extend (Stern & Keislar, 1977), and therefore, before the introduction of new methods, the attention should be paid to how these new methods are perceived by them. Finally, the dynamic nature of EFL teaching requires more training in teacher education especially when the innovations are new to the context.

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# APPENDIX: COLTAS*

*Please indicate your degree of agreement on the following statements:*

| | | Strongly Agree 5 | Agree 4 | Uncertain 3 | Disagree 2 | Strongly Disagree 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Language classes should be student-centered; not teacher centered. | | | | | |
| 2. | Pair work activities should be avoided as it is difficult for teachers to monitor each student's performance. | | | | | |
| 3. | Teacher correction should be avoided when it interrupts the flow of communication via student interaction. | | | | | |
| 4. | An orderly teacher centered class in necessary for students to get maximum benefit from teacher input in English. | | | | | |
| 5. | Students need to have immediate teacher feedback on the accuracy of the English they produce. | | | | | |
| 6. | Pair work develops oral conversational skills in English. | | | | | |
| 7. | Group work creates a motivating environment to use English. | | | | | |
| 8. | Teachers should allow opportunity for student-student correction in English. | | | | | |
| 9. | The major role of teachers is to transmit knowledge about language to students through explanations rather than to guide them for self-learning. | | | | | |
| 10. | Teacher feedback should be mainly focused on the content of the activity not on the form of language. | | | | | |
| 11. | It is of great importance that student responses in English be grammatically accurate. | | | | | |
| 12. | Teachers should be the initiators of most interactions in English in the class. | | | | | |
| 13. | To develop communicative skills, explicit grammar teaching is not necessary. | | | | | |
| 14. | Emphasis should be on language use rather than language rules while teaching English in the class. | | | | | |
| 15. | Pair work provides a greater amount of student involvement than a teacher-led activity. | | | | | |
| 16. | Group work helps those students who are not willing to speak in front of a full class. | | | | | |
| 17. | Focus on communicative competence produces linguistically inaccurate speakers of language. | | | | | |
| 18. | Teachers should make an analysis of student needs in order to design suitable tasks and activities in English. | | | | | |



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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **19.** | Group work causes a noisy classroom atmosphere which prevents meaningful practice in English. | | | | | |
| **20.** | Teacher feedback should be mainly focused on the appropriateness of the student responses rather than the linguistic accuracy of the forms. | | | | | |
| **21.** | Teachers should not tolerate mistakes in English forms. | | | | | |
| **22.** | Meaning focused activities are more effective to develop communicative ability than form-focused activities. | | | | | |
| **23.** | Students' attention should be drawn to the linguistic system of English through direct teaching of the structures. | | | | | |
| **24.** | Group work cannot increase the amount of English practice because the students tend to use their native language while working in groups. | | | | | |
| **25.** | Teacher correction should be provided only when it is required for effective communication. | | | | | |
| **26.** | Pair work is not an effective means of improving communication skills in English. | | | | | |
| **27.** | Helping students develop the use of context-appropriate language should be the primary goal of language teaching. | | | | | |
| **28.** | Students' language performance should be primarily judged by their grammatical correctness. | | | | | |
| **29.** | To learn how to communicate effectively, a considerable amount of time should be spent on grammatical explanations. | | | | | |
| **30.** | Since students have little information about the language, they should not be allowed to correct their peers' mistakes. | | | | | |
| **31.** | Most of the interaction in the class should be from students to students; not from teachers to students. | | | | | |
| **32.** | A teacher-directed class will motivate students to work productively with English. | | | | | |
| **33.** | Grammar teaching may be included in a lesson as a means of communication, not as the main goal of teaching. | | | | | |
| **34.** | Group work increases the quantity of oral/aural language practice. | | | | | |
| **35.** | Correction should be mainly focused on the mistakes in language structures. | | | | | |
| **36.** | Pair work cannot create a motivating environment to use English. | | | | | |

* Negative items of the scale are shown underlined here. However, no such designation was provided on the original instrument while collecting data


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